

May 26, 2004

To: NITC Commissioners
From: Anne Byers
Subject: IT Planning and Mini Grant Update

For the past two years, the NITC Community Council, in partnership with the University of Nebraska and Technologies Across Nebraska, has provided assistance to 15 Nebraska communities to develop technology plans. Each participating community received a \$2,500 mini grant to support their planning efforts.

Year 1 Community Profile: Ainsworth, Nebraska

Ainsworth is an excellent example of how technology-related development enhances economic development. Ainsworth was one of the first communities to start a community information technology committee in the mid-90's. More recently Ainsworth participated in Technology Across Nebraska's IT Planning and Mini Grant program as part of three-county planning effort, the KBR (Keya Paha/Brown/Rock Counties) TechKnowledge Coalition. Ainsworth's focus on providing technology training to residents in the mid-90's—resulting in a local workforce with technology skills—gave Ainsworth an edge in recruiting a call center for an Omaha IT firm.

Although that first call center closed, Ainsworth has now recruited a new call center. Technologent, Inc., a California-based technology company located its first national service center in Ainsworth last November. The company employs 30 people and has plans to recruit and hire more employees this spring. The Ainsworth center is an expansion of Technologent's services that address new inside sales, targeting service contracts and maintenance agreement renewals for products manufactured by Sun Microsystems.

The KBR TechKnowledge Coalition completed their technology plan last spring. The group's efforts on focusing attention on technology issues in the region has led to two other new developments. The committee's technology survey revealed that local residents needed computer support services and were willing to pay for these surveys. Recently a new business providing computer and networking support services has opened, employing two full-time employees and a part-time consultant. Three Rivers Telephone Company has also recently decided to provide local, long distance, and DSL services in Ainsworth in competition with Qwest.

Other Updates from Year 1 Communities

With funding from a grant from the USDA Rural Utilities Service , **Crawford** has organized a non-profit group to provide wireless broadband service in the community. The service is now operational. The group will also be opening a technology center June 1.

West Point has installed a community videoconferencing facility for use by local businesses and residents.

Year 2 Update

Seward recently joined the IT Planning and Mini Grant program and is beginning by visiting with the community leaders of two of Nebraska's most tech-savvy communities. In May, the Seward technology committee visited Aurora. In June, South Sioux City Administrator Lance Hedquist will visit with the group.

Ord is mailing out their technology survey this week.

Maskell and **Dakota City** are completing their technology plans. Members of the Dakota City committee have discovered that their library only has two computers for public use. These computers are in great demand by students. The committee is working with the Friends of the Library group to obtain additional computers. Maskell has discovered that their telecommunications infrastructure is an asset that could be used to encourage economic development.

Homer recently hosted a technology fair. The community recently learned that a new communications tower is being built near Homer to provide interoperability among emergency responders in the tri-state Siouxland area. The community is talking to a wireless broadband provider about using the tower to expand service into Homer.

Lexington is focusing their efforts on documenting telecommunications assets in to enhance business recruitment efforts.

Hastings is working on getting the business community interested in using technology to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and expand markets.